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634 evoked respect and unqualified obedience in me, or was it plain curiosity to see the man who dared to deal so roughly with the Fan-tse? I did not say a word, but climbed quickly down from my horse and followed the Chinese who hurried on ahead of me. First we dashed around three or four corners, then, no less quickly, we climbed a steep wooden stairway, then another, and still another whose treads were even steeper. The soldiers helpfully pulled and shoved me up. Again we rounded a dozen corners, hurried through a labyrinth of rooms, a school, servants' rooms, kitchens and soldiers' rooms, finally reaching the rooms of the mandarin where I, completely out of breath, found myself in a nicely paneled room standing opposite the "Wu da lao ye."

/191/ The "grand old gentleman" was a dignified, slim man with energetic and intelligent features and clever little eyes. His pale yellow skin contrasted sharply with the healthy brown of his servants. He was one of the modern officials of China, one belonging to the new era which was dawning, but he also still kept to the old customs and therefore very seldom went out. Most of the time he went forth from his castle like a spider along the various threads of his governmental system. He was a Hankow man and had been here only two years. In this short time he had, along with a retinue of only 15 Chinese officials, succeeded in bringing peace and order to a territory as large as a Prussian province and more turbulent than one can imagine, and in making it possible for his countrymen to pursue their peaceful activities as farmers. If ever he goes out, all the Tibetans bow their heads, get down from their horses and remove their caps, as though they were in the presence of a holy lama. This sort of thing the Hsining people who are so very proud of themselves and think they are such heroes, have never achieved. His soldiers carry orders as far as Dergi, in fact he settles lawsuits among Tibetans as far up as Tschoktsen and into territory presumably ruled by the Hsining amban.

Addressing me with gruff but amiable brevity, the mandarin welcomed me. As a representative of China he seemed honestly glad to know that I was on this side of Tibet all in one piece, and gave me to understand that, as far as he was concerned, no European would get past him into Tibet.

574 We conversed for a while and the thoughtful host himself offered me warm, sweet cakes, when a few Tibetans came and put my boxes and bags outside the door. I wanted to excuse myself that the men had mistakenly carried my things into his house when he interrupted

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me abruptly and said: "These are my servants and they are carrying 574
out my orders." With a commanding voice that suddenly made me think of Ru da lao ye of Kue de ting and the fate of Captain Watts-Jones, he thundered at me: "You are my guest. There is no other place for you but a room in my castle (tsch'ai tse)." I was so startled that at first I only dared ask him cautiously whether there was peace in China and what was the relationship between Europeans and Chinese.

But Wu was an excellent host. As long as I lived in his house my servants were not permitted to cook for me. He personally invited me morning and afternoon to his two meals and for three days he would not let me travel on. When he learned of my misfortune in fording the Dsa Chu he sent out couriers who were again supposed to hunt for my things.

I had been given a large room. I had scarcely sat down there at a very shaky table and hoped to be able to work in peace and quiet, when my first visitors came dashing in. The two bright young sons of the mandarin, boys of six and eight years, had, after the manner of European youngsters, decided I was their interesting uncle and attached themselves to me until the last minute I was there. One of them on his second visit already brought his favorite plaything, a snarling old monkey, which, with its smart tricks, /192/ did not add to the quiet of my room. The Tibetans had chopped off its tail, which was supposed to make it smarter. Even the nursemaid came hurrying up with [504]
the youngest offspring, and soon the mothers of the little ones appeared, six Chinese women who were heavily made up with white and tripped along on their three-inch lily feet. The mandarin had brought them along from his distant home of Hu peh.

Even at night there was not much peace and quiet in the castle. In the next room which was separated from mine by a thin wall of boards, the soldiers sat on guard and from the stroke of nine on they beat their drum. Fortunately for me, the drum had a large hole and produced only a muffled sound. About every hour a shot was fired which startled me unmercifully. Finally, if one got accustomed to all this racket and lay in sweet slumber early in the morning, the 972
Chinese school began just across the courtyard. There 30 abecedarians, Chinese and Tibetan children, learned to read and write Chinese. In back against the wall was the teacher's lectern, and in front of the teacher, with their backs to him and facing the door and me, the pupils sat on low benches, and shouted out into the courtyard the ancient wise sayings of Confucius and the other great philosophers of antiquity from their primers. From the rear the teacher saw to it that